



The City of Seattle

International Special Review District

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ISRD 28/24

MINUTES FOR THE MEETING OF TUESDAY, February 27, 2024

Time: 4:30pm

Place: Hybrid Meeting

Board Members Present

Heather Hargesheimer

Nella Kwan

Kyle Jacobson

Adrian Lam

Staff

Rebecca Frestedt

Melinda Bloom

Absent

Gary Lee

Paul Lee

Chair Adrian Lam called the meeting to order at 4:30 pm.

022724.1 Approval of Minutes

November 28, 2023

MM/SC/HH/AL

2:0:2

Minutes approved. Ms. Kwan and Mr. Jacobson abstained.

022724.2 Public Comment

There was no public comment.

022724.3 BOARD BRIEFING

Cindy Wilson, Headwater People, provided an overview of the work they do. She said they work with government and not-for-profit organizations, using traditional practices that can be in contrast to colonial and imperial world views, to help manage organizational change. She provided background on their work with the Chinatown International District (CID) Vision Group and the development of a neighborhood Strategic Plan in 2022. She said that they want the plan to be practical and actionable. The work is informed by an advisory group (CID Vision Group) that is working with government agencies and staff.

Mr. Jacobson asked if funding comes from the City.

Ms. Wilson said that the current funding is through the City, noting that other funding methods may be needed for continued support of the Vision Group's work. She said SCIDpda and Denise Louie have been fiscal sponsors.

Ms. Wilson then explained there are six issue areas of the Neighborhood Plan: Community Health and Safety; Neighborhood Character, Culture, and History; Community Strength and Self Determination; Business and Economic Strength; Housing; and Transportation and Mobility. She noted that the issues are deeply intertwined. She said this is a 10-year plan.

Matt Echohawk-Hayashi, Headwater People, said while the City is the main partner. There will be some things they will work on with county, state and federal as well. He noted the challenges of URM buildings.

Ms. Wilson said they are working on translating the Neighborhood Plan to an actionable implementation plan. They are partnering with city departments and CID Partners to ensure viability and accountability. She said they are looking to have draft in first quarter of 2024. She said there are opportunities for partnerships with the International Special Review District overlap. She said they will move forward action steps, particularly around lighting and other public spaces.

Ms. Frestedt invited CID Vision Group member, Betty Lau, to speak.

Ms. Lau said that Ms. Wilson and Mr. Echohawk-Hayashi have been a huge help and handled the group well. She said for the first time there has been participation by family associations and tong representatives. She said it is a huge step forward in having a collective vision. She said this is one of the better groups she has worked with over the last 40 years. She said it is helpful to have a more representational voice.

Mr. Lam noted the ISRD overlap and asked how the Design Guidelines and standards can help support the work.

Ms. Frestedt said that is something the Board can discuss. She said Board's authority is vested in the Land Use Code and the Charter for the City, specifically Chapter 23.66. She encouraged Board members to think about where there might be opportunities to fold in language and goals and visions of the community into the Board's work. She said it helps for the Board to have a deeper understanding of what has informed the Strategic Plan.

Mr. Echohawk-Hayashi said they have been meeting with a vision group which is dynamic and diverse. He said they can coalesce ideas and plans and projects that have been in the works for a while and are looking at how to work together as a whole ecosystem.

Ms. Frestedt noted discussions she has had about work the Department of Neighborhoods (DON) would like to do in partnership with the community around the elections, for example, and helping to inform some of the decision-making. She said there is an

opportunity to look to the Vision Group and work with stakeholders who have expressed an interest in participation.

Mr. Lam asked if conversations about housing were occurring, noting that the Board does not have purview over the type of housing in a development.

Ms. Wilson said that they are cognizant the neighborhood has a lot of 'naturally occurring' low-income housing outside of market forces. She said the fear is that any improvements will have a domino effect and lead to displacement. She said they are looking at a very delicate balance because from what they are hearing from residents is that a lot of residents already have tenuous or strained or no-existing relations with their landlords or building owners. She said the majority of the low-income housing here is for elderly folks who are a vulnerable group. There are no options for them to remain in the city if they end up losing this housing or if options are not created for them.

Mr. Echohawk-Hayashi said public safety is an issue and while people love the neighborhood and live there and want to be there for a reason. He said for a lot of seniors, they don't go anywhere anymore because they don't feel safe. He reiterated that people don't communicate with landlords due to language barriers, accessibility. He said maintenance issues are also a challenge for these reasons.

Mr. Lam asked if a housing inventory or database has been done to better understand the discrepancy and has this information been tracked in any way.

Mr. Echohawk-Hayashi said there isn't a good breakdown yet but they are interested in it. He said if the census data is correct there is a lot to be learned for the neighborhood about how to make housing affordable. He said rent has increased over 100% in the city on average since 2010 compared to 17% in the district. He said this underscores how vulnerable the neighborhood is to displacement. He said there is a lot to learn and they hope to spend some resources to understand better.

Mr. Lam asked how to determine the right balance and how to achieve it?

Ms. Wilson said there is an opportunity to collect additional data and do a deeper dive in the next year or two. She said the philosophy of a healthy neighborhood is a "mix of folks". She said they didn't want their outreach plan to be solely small business focused so brought in a person to do residential outreach. She noted an ecosystem that includes small businesses and residents.

Ms. Frestedt said that while many residential buildings are managed by community organizations there are increasingly buildings that are not. She said the number of buildings with new ownership or that are newly constructed is increasing. She noted there are new residents coming in who don't necessarily reflect the historic fabric of the neighborhood, and the importance of balancing those voices with those who continue to call this a cultural home.

Mr. Jacobson stated affordability is not something the board has purview over and it's important to acknowledge that. He said extending land use restrictions can be strenuous

to applicants and add to the cost of a project. He said it is a tension the board should be mindful of.

Ms. Frestedt thanked Ms. Wilson and Mr. Echohawk-Hayashi for their time and said she looked forward to future conversations and an updated briefing when the time is right. She added that there is an opportunity to increase the frequency of community-led briefings to update the Board on current projects. She said there is a lot of work underway by individual community-based organizations and groups that can help inform the Board in its decision-making. She said that administrative review of some of the smaller applications creates new opportunities to hear from the community.

Ms. Hargesheimer appreciated the presentation and looked forward to further conversations.

022724.4 Staff Summary and Board Business

Ms. Frestedt provided an overview of items reviewed administratively.

Ms. Frestedt explained the Financial Impact Statement (FIS) requirement for board members to disclose any compensation they may have received for work in another part of the city.

Ms. Frestedt provided an update on board member appointments and council confirmation.